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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of the claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-15. Cancelled

Claim 16. (Currently Amended) A system for enabling a requesting party to initiate a telephone call directly to a voice mail box associated with a service subscriber to a voice mail system (VMS), comprising:

a call control node configured as a virtual service switching point in a switched telephone network, the call control node being adapted to receive a connection request message sent through a data packet network in response to a request to access the voice mail box by a calling party, the connection request message requesting setup of a direct call from the calling party to a voice mail box of the service subscriber, and to respond to the connection request message by formulating ~~a call set-up message~~ messages required to initiate establishment of a call connection establish the direct call from the calling party to the VMS, one of the call set-up message ~~messages~~ having a format reserved for redirected call set-up messages used by service switching points (SSPs) to redirect uncompleted calls to the service subscriber, so that the VMS provides access to the voice mail box.

Claim 17. (Currently Amended) A system as claimed in claim 16 wherein the call control node comprises an interface to a common channel signaling (CCS) network that operates under a signaling system 7 (SS7) protocol, and the one of the call set-up messages is an integrated services digital network-user part (ISUP) initial address message (IAM).

Claim 18. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 17 wherein the call control node further comprises:

means for formulating an IAM;

means for inserting a directory number (DN) of the VMS into a called party number parameter of the IAM, in conformance with a SS7 standard; and

means for inserting an original called number parameter, a redirecting number parameter and a redirection information parameter into the IAM, the

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redirecting number parameter containing a DN of the service subscriber, in conformance with the SS7 standard.

Claim 19. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 18 wherein the call control node further comprises means for inserting a redirecting reason code into the redirection information parameter.

Claim 20. (Currently Amended) A system as claimed in claim 19 wherein the call control node further comprises a call control application (CCA) adapted to control the call control node (CCN), and the CCA is further adapted to receive the message requesting the establishment of the direct call to the voice mail box.

Claim 21. (Currently Amended) A system as claimed in claim 20 wherein the CCN is a virtual switching point in the direct call ~~connection~~, and the connection request message is a reconnect request message from call termination equipment, and the reconnect request message contains a DN of the call termination equipment, a DN of the requesting party, a DN of the service subscriber, and a DN of the VMS.

Claim 22. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 21 further comprising a directory service database adapted to supply the call termination equipment with the DN of the VMS, and the DN of the service subscriber.

Claim 23. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 22 wherein the directory service database is further adapted to supply the call termination equipment with a redirecting reason code in response to a query.

Claim 24. (Currently Amended) A system as claimed in claim 21 wherein the CCA is further adapted to receive the reconnect request message, and to initiate a release by the CCN of a part of the direct ~~established~~ call ~~connection~~ between a virtual instance of the CCN and the call termination ~~telephony~~ equipment, and to initiate an extension of the established call connection by the CCN between the virtual instance of the CCN and the VMS using the IAM.

Claim 25. (Previously Presented) A system as claimed in claim 20 further comprising a worldwide web server adapted to receive click-to-voice mail notifications from at least one web page and to relay the connection request message to the CCA, conforming to a predefined format.

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Claim 26. **(Original)** A system as claimed in claim 25 wherein the connection request message is relayed through a proxy server.

Claim 27. **(Original)** A system as claimed in claim 25 wherein the connection request message contains the DNs of the requesting party, service subscriber and VMS.

Claim 28. **(Currently Amended)** A system as claimed in claim 25-26 further comprising a database adapted to supply the proxy server with the DN of the VMS associated with the DN of the service subscriber in response to a query.

Claim 29. **(Original)** A system as claimed in claim 28 wherein the database is further adapted to supply the proxy server with and a redirecting reason code in response to the query.

Claim 30. **(Currently Amended)** A system for providing a directory service with a direct to voice mail option for a voice mail system (VMS) service subscriber[[s]], comprising:

a directory service that permits a requesting party to communicate an identifier used to locate a directory record associated with the VMS service subscriber, the directory service being adapted to provide the requesting party with an option to be connected directly to the VMS service subscriber's voice mail box after the record is located; and

means a call control node for formulating a common channel signaling release message (REL) to release a part of the call connection between the call control node and the directory service and to formulate an initial address message (IAM) containing a redirecting number parameter to extend the call connection from the call control node to the VMS to connect the requesting party directly to the voice mail box of the VMS service subscriber.

Claim 31. **(Original)** The system as claimed in claim 30 wherein the directory service is instantiated on call termination equipment adapted to receive dial-up connections from the public switched telephone network (PSTN) and to interact with the requesting party.

Claim 32. **(Previously Presented)** The system as claimed in claim 31 wherein the directory service is a directory service application instantiated on a worldwide web server adapted to interact with the requesting party through the Internet.

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Claim 33. (Currently Amended) The system as claimed in claim 30 wherein the call control mode means for formulating a common channel signaling initial address message (IAM) is a call control node (CCN) that is configured as a virtual switching point in the public switched telephone network (PSTN) and a physical node in a common channel signaling network of the PSTN.

Claim 34. (Original) The system as claimed in claim 33 wherein the CCN comprises a call control application (CCA) that is adapted to interface with an Internet Protocol (IP) network, and further adapted to provide control functions to the CCN.

Claim 35. (Currently Amended) A system for providing a click to voice mail option accessed from a server on an internet protocol (IP) network, comprising:

a user interface for permitting a requesting party to select the click to voice mail option, the click to voicemail option being associated with a particular voice mail box of a voice mail system (VMS) subscriber;

means for forwarding at the server being adapted to forward an IP data message requesting setup of a connection directly to the voice mail box to a call control node connected to the IP network; and

means for receiving the call control node being adapted to receive the message and formulating formulate a common channel signaling system initial address message (IAM) containing a directory number of the requesting party to launch a call from the call control node to the requesting party and formulating another IAM containing a directory number of the VMS inserted in a called party number parameter of the IAM and a directory of the VMS service subscriber inserted in the redirecting number parameter of the IAM to launch a call from the call control node to the VMS.

Claim 36. (Currently Amended) A system as claimed in claim 35 wherein the ~~means for receiving the message comprises a call control node (CCN) adapted to receive messages from the IP network, and to formulate and send the IAM into the common channel signaling network~~ user interface comprises a worldwide web page.

Claim 37. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 36 wherein the CCN is configured as a physical node in the common channel signaling network and as a virtual switching point in a switched telephone network associated with the common channel signaling network.

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Claim 38. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 35 wherein the user interface is provided by one of a worldwide web page and an electronic mail message.

Claim 39. (Currently Amended) A system as claimed in claim 38 wherein the server ~~means for forwarding~~ comprises the worldwide web server.

Claim 40. (Currently Amended) A system as claimed in claim 38 wherein the server ~~means for forwarding~~ comprises a proxy server that receives the message requesting setup of a connection directly to the voice mail box and forwards the message to a call control node adapted to receive messages from the IP network.